



Notice of Preparation of Environmental Impact Report

June 1, 2013

TO: State Clearinghouse
Responsible and Trustee Agencies
Interested Agencies and Parties

FROM: Sonoma County Water Agency
404 Aviation Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Occidental County Sanitation District Recycled Water Storage and Beneficial Reuse Project

The Occidental County Sanitation District (District) is preparing an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Occidental Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) Recycled Water Storage and Beneficial Reuse Project (Proposed Project). The Sonoma County Water Agency (Water Agency), which operates the District's WWTF under contract, will prepare the EIR on behalf of the District in accordance with the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the Water Agency's Procedures for the Implementation of CEQA. The District will act as the Lead Agency pursuant to CEQA, and will consider all comments received in response to this Notice of Preparation (NOP), including comments from responsible and trustee agencies, property owners, and interested parties regarding the scope and content of the information to be included in the EIR. The following sections provide information regarding project location, background information, project need and objective, project description, issues to be addressed in the EIR, and public comment period.

Project Location

The Proposed Project will be developed primarily on property owned by John and Pauline Loades, which is located less than a mile east of the community of Occidental, at 5502 Graton Road (**Figure 1**). The property is bound generally by Graton Road to the north, Occidental Road to the south, and Facendini Lane to the east. Other project components would be located along county roads and easements between the WWTF and the Loades' property. The WWTF is located approximately ¼ mile (0.25 mi) east of the community of Occidental and southwest of the Loades property (**Figure 1**). The county roads that may be

utilized for this project are located in a mixture of unincorporated urban areas, rural residential areas, and agricultural and forest lands in the coastal ranges of western Sonoma County. The District service area covers approximately 55 acres and provides service to approximately 95 parcels in the community of Occidental.

Background Information

The District has utilized Graham's Pond, located on the Loades' property, as a year-round storage reservoir since 1977. However, North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) analysis has determined that Graham's Pond is a water of the United States due to its construction and location at the headwaters of Dutch Bill Creek. The pond was originally constructed as an agricultural pond.

The WWTF is currently permitted by the Regional Board to operate under the Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) adopted in Order No. R1-2012-0101, dated December 6, 2012. This Order serves as the District's current National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit No. CA0023051. The WDRs will serve for a five-year term beginning February 1, 2013. The Order implements provisions of the Regional Board Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan), whereby no WWTF is allowed to discharge waste to the Russian River or its tributaries during the period of May 15 through September 30. Since Graham's Pond is considered a water of the United States and a tributary to the Russian River, it is not permissible to discharge into the Pond from May 15 through September 30. Unfortunately, it is currently not possible for the District to meet this requirement and the WWTF must discharge year-round since Graham's Pond is the only storage pond available.

As a result of threatened or continued discharge violations, the Regional Board also adopted Cease and Desist Order (CDO) No. R1-2012-0102 on December 6, 2012, including provisions of the Basin Plan that require advanced wastewater treatment for discharges to surface waters. In order to remedy the problem of discharging to Graham's Pond in the summer and Dutch Bill Creek in the winter, the Regional Board has provided a schedule to allow the District time to develop a project to bring the District into compliance with the Order. The time schedule requires the District to complete a capital improvement project and achieve full compliance with all applicable water discharge requirements by January 31, 2018.

The District has been working with the Occidental Working Group, a citizen's advisory committee, to identify a solution to this problem that works within the limited financial resources of the District. The District and Working Group have determined that the most feasible and cost effective approach would be to eliminate discharges to Dutch Bill Creek by beneficially reusing all water the WWTF treats during the year. Making the WWTF a zero-discharge facility requires expanding the District's existing recycled water storage and irrigation capacity. The Occidental Working Group finds that the zero-discharge strategy is consistent with its goals of minimizing costs to ratepayers and developing beneficial reuse. By converting to a zero-discharge facility, the District will save significant long-term costs

related to operational permitting requirements, as well as contribute to the long-term health of Dutch Bill Creek.

The District received a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to conduct the preliminary work of designing a recycled water storage and irrigation project, which resulted in the preparation of a 30% Conceptual Design Report (Design Report). The Design Report identified a study area, developed design criteria to size the proposed storage pond, and assessed several proposed project alternatives on the Loades property and neighboring property across Graton Road (Figure 2). The Proposed Project will implement the objectives and recommendations set forth in the Design Report.

Project Need and Objective

The Proposed Project is needed to reduce the possibility of discharge violations at the WWTF. The objective of the project is to construct a new off-stream storage facility and enhance and expand existing irrigation on the Loades' property to allow the District to operate the WWTF as a zero-discharge facility while providing a beneficial reuse of recycled water for irrigation purposes.

Project Description

The Proposed Project would consist of construction and operation of an approximately 12.5 million gallon (MG) recycled water storage pond east of the existing Graham's Pond on the Loades property (Figure 2). The pond would have a membrane liner and a cover with a collection sump and pump to remove excess rainwater from the cover. A 12 foot wide access road and 15 foot wide pond perimeter road would be constructed and graveled for all-weather use. The access road is proposed to connect to Facendini Lane through an existing gate on the Loades property and would be utilized for routine maintenance and operations activities. The pond would be fenced for safety concerns.

Irrigation areas would be separated into two pressure zones on the Loades' property: an approximately 18 acre lower zone, including currently irrigated areas along Graton Road, would be irrigated by gravity from the pond; and a 6 acre upper zone adjacent to the proposed pond that would utilize a small booster pump. The proposed recycled water storage pond is at a higher elevation than the existing Graham's Pond and WWTF and would require a transfer pump station at the WWTF to lift the recycled water to the pond. Extension of the existing transfer main would also be required. A new electric service would be installed at the pond to provide power for the pond cover sump pump and the irrigation booster pump.

Based on the Design Report, the proposed pond location is the recommended project because it avoids significant construction within asbestos-bearing and/or expansive soils, significantly reducing costs of the Proposed Project. Additionally, the Proposed Project is the least visible alternative site from public areas and will not impact wetlands or other water bodies.

Issues to be Addressed in the EIR

In accordance with CEQA, the Proposed Project EIR will address the potential environmental impacts, either individually or cumulatively, associated with the construction, operation, and maintenance of the Proposed Project. Specific areas of analysis may include: Aesthetics, Agricultural and Forest Resources, Air Quality, Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Noise, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, Transportation and Traffic, and Utilities and Service Systems. Where feasible, mitigation measures will be proposed to avoid or reduce impacts. Alternatives analysis will review the No Project Alternative and alternative sites within the study area. The EIR analysis will consider input from the public and public agencies during the NOP review period. Decision-makers, responsible and trustee agencies under CEQA, and interested persons and parties will also have an opportunity to comment on the EIR after it is published and circulated for public review.

Public Comment Period for this Notice of Preparation

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, responses must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 35 days after receipt of this notice. The public comment period will close at 5:00 p.m. on **Friday, July 5, 2013**. Please include a name, address, and telephone number of a contact person for all future correspondence on this subject. Please send comments to:

Occidental County Sanitation District
c/o Sonoma County Water Agency
Attn: Jeff Church
404 Aviation Boulevard
Santa Rosa, CA 95403.

Comments may also be submitted electronically to: jchurch@scwa.ca.gov

Scoping Meeting

In order for the public and regulatory agencies to have an opportunity to ask questions and submit comments on the scope of the Proposed Project EIR, a Scoping Meeting will be held during the NOP review period. The Scoping Meeting will use an Open House format. Agency staff and consultants will be available to answer questions and provide information about the project, but a formal presentation will not be made in order to allow interested parties to participate at anytime during the Open House. Comment forms will be supplied for those who wish to submit written comments at the Open House. Written comments may also be submitted anytime during the NOP review period, which closes on **Friday, July 5, 2013**. The date, time, and location of the Open House are listed below:

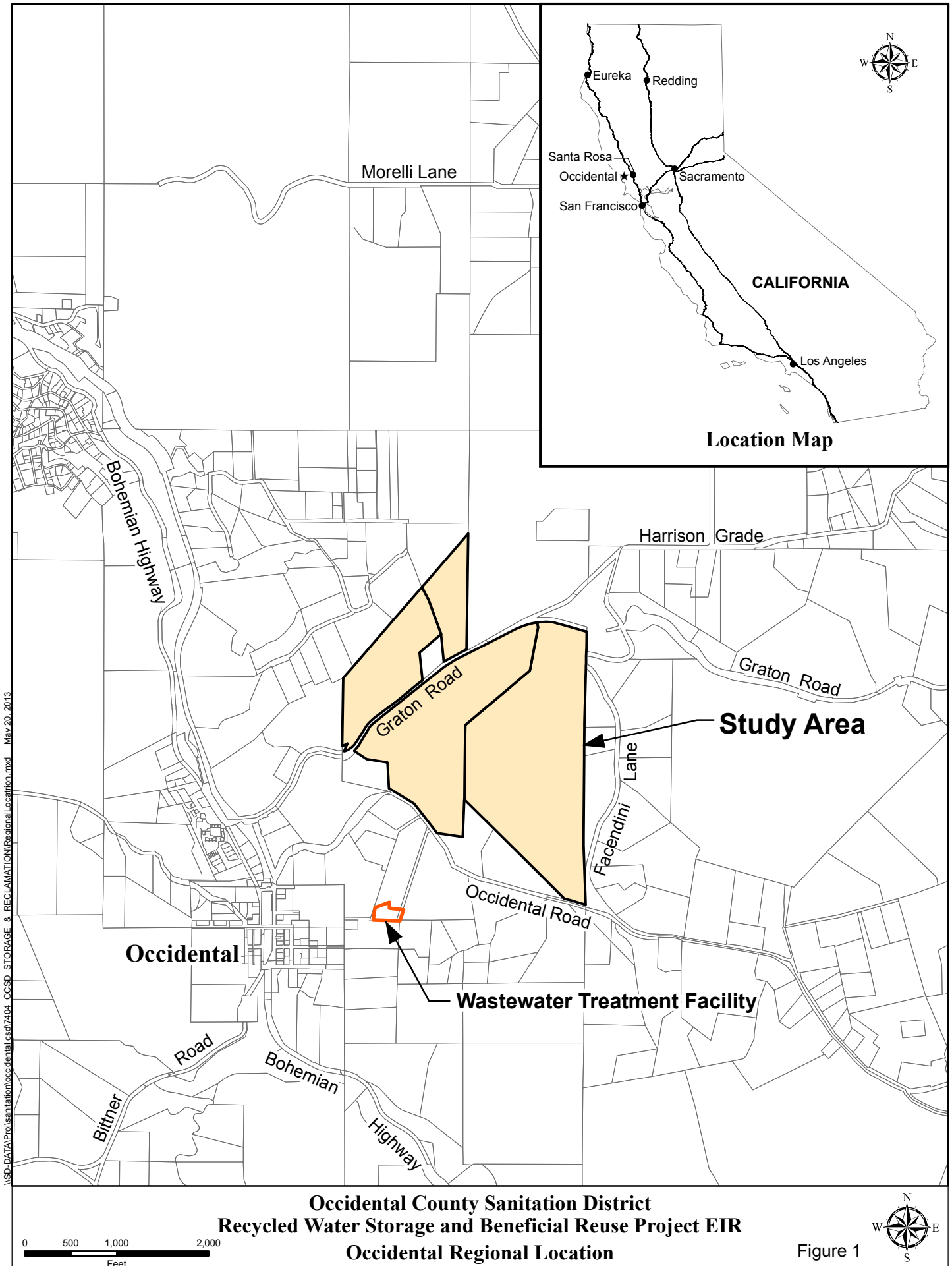
Thursday, June 20, 2013
6:30 p.m - 8:30 p.m.
Harmony School District Gymnasium
1935 Bohemian Highway, Occidental

DISABLED ACCOMMODATION: If you have a disability which requires an accommodation, an alternative format, or requires another person to assist you while attending this meeting, please contact the Sonoma County Water Agency at (707) 524-8378, as soon as possible to ensure arrangements for accommodation.

Contact Information

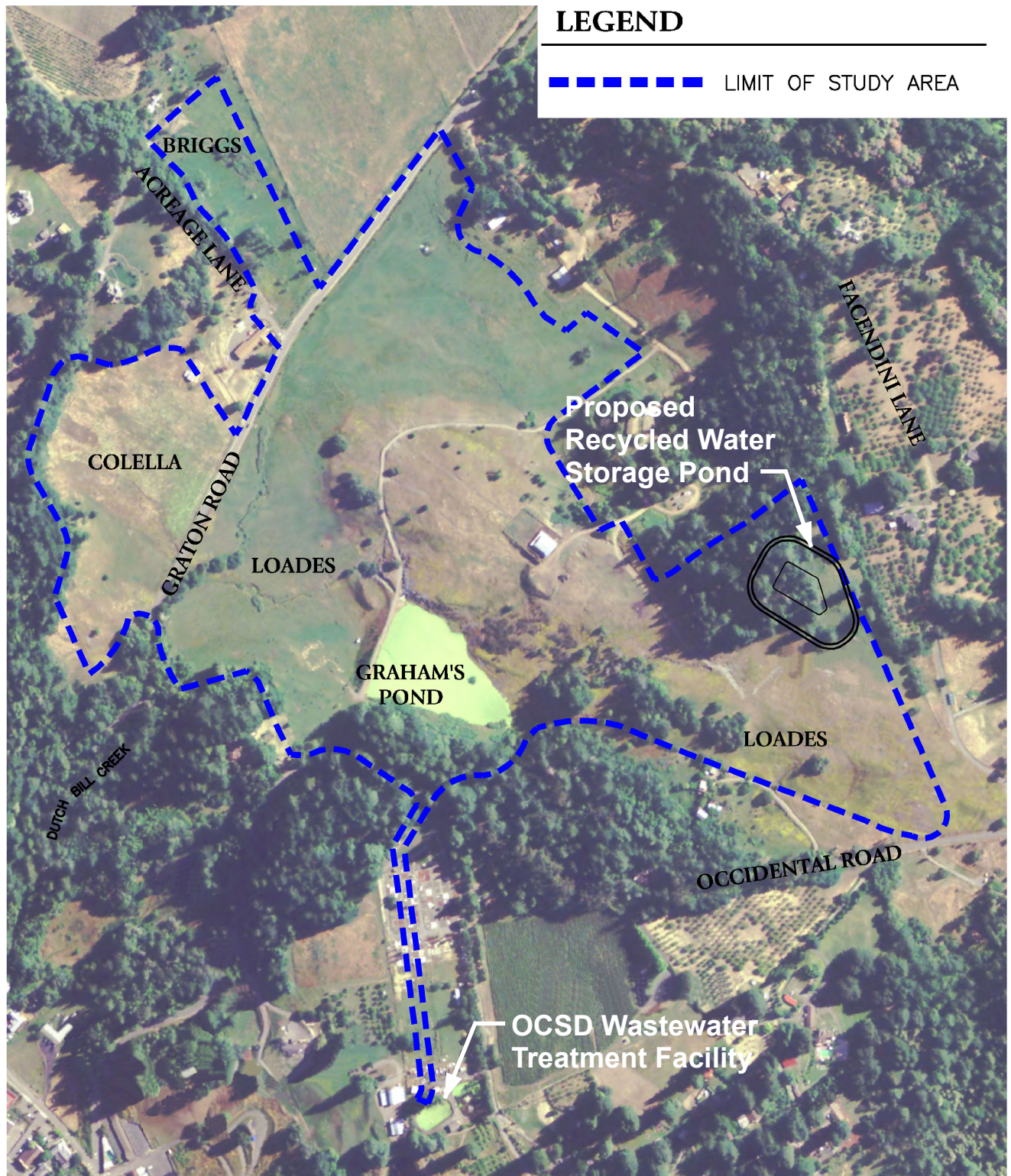
Documents or files related to the Project are available for review online at the project web page at <http://www.scwa.ca.gov/OSPRWP/>, or at the Water Agency's administrative office located at 404 Aviation Boulevard, Santa Rosa, California, 95403.

If you have any questions regarding this Notice of Preparation, or if you wish to update information on our mailing list, please contact Jeff Church at 707-547-1949 or jchurch@scwa.ca.gov



LEGEND

--- LIMIT OF STUDY AREA



Occidental County Sanitation District Recycled Water Storage and Beneficial Reuse Project EIR Study Area

0 250 500 1,000
Feet



Figure 2